



Traffic Safety News and Facts for Employers January 15, 2007

Latest Traffic Safety News

44,000 Dead In Traffic Crashes Should Be Top News Story

In a December 28 article, Peter Woolley wrote in the Washington Post, "the nonstory of 2006 was also the nonstory of 2005. It is a nonstory every year going back decades. Yet the number of people who die in car crashes in the United States is staggering, even if it is absent from the agenda of most public officials and largely ignored by the public." Woolley helps readers to put the 44,000 deaths due to traffic crashes into perspective by comparisons to the war in Iraq and the South Asian tsunami. He points out that opinion leaders largely ignore the issue and that there are "no marches, walkathons, commemorative stamps or fund-raising drives" organized nor is the issue the "subject of public affairs shows." He suggests that related statistics appear daily in major newspapers or broadcasts, roads need to be made safer, speeding and aggressive driving need to be much more rigorously controlled, trucks need to be separated from automobiles wherever possible and cars need to be built slower and stronger. But Woolley says, "every solution is readily opposed by someone: manufacturers, industrial unions, truckers, consumers, taxpayers — though all are potential victims themselves. The public is not to blame. It is hemmed in on every side by mind-numbing advertising and shouted stories of the moment. Apparently no medium is willing to bludgeon people — as they need to be — with statistics and trends on the dangers facing them every time they set out in their automobiles." Read the article at: http://www2.ljworld.com/news/2006/dec/28/traffic_deaths_should_top_news/

Source: The Washington Post via LJ World.com, December 28, 2006

ARTBA Predicts More Gridlock For US Roads

With the US population topping 300 million, there is the growing problem of gridlock on the country's road network. There has been a 50% increase in population since 1968, while the number of licensed drivers has nearly doubled from 107 million to 199 million and the number of vehicle kilometers driven has nearly tripled. The American Road & Transportation Builders Association's (ARTBA) estimates that between today and 2043 based on current trends, highway capacity will only grow 9%, but traffic levels will swell by 135%. As a result, the average motorist can expect to spend 160 hours stuck in traffic delays, or the equivalent of four weeks each year. This is a recipe for a grid locked nation, ARTBA says, unless major steps are taken soon to add new highway and public transit capacity to accommodate future US growth.

Advocacy Group Issues Report On States' Progress In Enacting Laws

The Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety -- an alliance of consumer, health and safety groups and insurance companies and agents -- released its fourth annual report on January 8 of the 50 states and their progress in enacting laws that curb traffic highway deaths and injuries. The group uses 15 traffic safety laws and other laws to rank the states. The release of the study coincides with every state legislature opening their 2007 sessions this month. Advocates found that no state has adopted all 15 traffic safety measures which cover five major areas of safety behavior: seat belt use, motorcycle helmet use, child booster seat use, teen driving, and impaired driving. The "2007 Roadmap to State Highway Safety Laws" report can be found at: www.saferoads.org



ASSE Counts Transportation Among Top Safety Issues

Although workplace fatalities declined in 2005, American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE) President Donald Jones Sr. emphasized in a January 5 release that it is important to remain vigilant, as transportation-related crashes, the aging work force, nanotechnology risks and the possibility of an avian flu pandemic will be significant safety issues in the coming year. "ASSE and its members must keep our focus on creating the safest work environments possible, and we must press the mindset that one injury, one illness or one fatality is one too many," Jones said. He placed special emphasis on transportation-related crashes, which continue to be the No. 1 cause of on-the-job deaths. "Work-related transportation deaths are a major concern," Jones said. "Many of our members develop and implement rigid commercial vehicle driver safety policies resulting in saved lives, increased use of seat belts and more. However, we cannot control other drivers and the condition of the roads and bridges. But we can and do help our employees by providing safety programs, a structured vehicle maintenance program and vehicles that offer the highest levels of occupant protection." According to the Bureau of Transportation Statistics transportation-related deaths in 2004 represented 43 percent of all workplace fatalities.

Automaker Developing Pre-crash Safety Systems

Japanese automakers are studying a system that alerts drivers to the presence of children in a busy urban neighborhood. As part of the experiment, Nissan Motor Corp. is placing bracelets on young children that relay signals to vehicles in the area. Drivers passing through are told, "Children nearby, please be careful." These new "pre-crash" safety technologies are emerging that target the crucial milliseconds before a crash or help drivers avoid the crashes in the first place. Link to further information on Sky Project from Nissan: <http://www.nissan-global.com/JP/SAFETY/ITS/SKY/index.html>

Traffic: Bad For Commuters, Good For Advertisers

A new study published by the Outdoor Advertising Association of America points to several demographic trends which validate the value of the ability to reach consumers outside the home. Somewhat perversely, the report celebrates the most annoying aspect of many Americans' daily routine--sitting in traffic. "Americans are spending more time in their car than ever before as commute times are significantly up, traffic is more congested and the Baby Boomer generation mainly moves via auto," the report noted somewhat gleefully. Even better, it went on, "congestion is getting worse in heavily populated areas and smaller metro areas as well." To view the report, visit: http://publications.mediapost.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=Articles.showArticleHomePage&art_aid=53799

Driver Shortage Drives Trucking Firms To Hire Older Drivers

According to the American Trucking Association (ATA), the shortage of commercial drivers, estimated at 20,000, is expected to increase fivefold by 2014. To fill the positions, trucking companies increasingly are turning to the expanding pool of older workers for their solid work histories, valuable life experience and their good driving records. ATA has formed a partnership with the American Association of Retired Persons to attract older drivers who have never thought about a career in truck driving to do so. Tim Lynch of ATA explains, "One of the areas that the companies themselves are aggressively looking at is the older worker. They are a mature driver, and they have a lot of experience on the road. Second-career workers, people who have worked a long time, have good, safe driving records." Now more than 30 percent of Schneider's workforce is made up of workers 50 and older, in excess of 3,000 drivers. And the company reports that they are having good retention experiences with these older drivers. View the article at: http://www.chicagotribune.com/business/chi-0612260105dec26_0,3277646.story?coll=chi-business-hed

Source: The Chicago Tribune, December 26, 2006



Polypharmacy and Older Drivers: Identifying Strategies To Study Drug Usage And Driving Functioning Among Older Drivers

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has released a report that explores practical means to obtain information about drug usage by older drivers under everyday, "real world" conditions that are valid and reliable. The report also examines the consequences of multiple drug use for safe driving. View the report at:

<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/staticfiles/DOT/NHTSA/Traffic%20Injury%20Control/Articles/Associated%20Files/Polypharmacy.pdf>

Virginia Police Expand Aerial Enforcement To Curb Aggressive Drivers

Virginia state police say that complaints from commuters in the traffic-clogged area have jumped considerably in recent years as congestion has worsened. So they launched an airborne effort as the latest offensive against aggressive drivers because of their roles in causing crashes, highway deaths and everyday driver frustration. The VA State Police aviation unit has a fleet of four Cessna 182s based across the state. Police have turned to aerial enforcement because it is one of the most effective ways to spot aggressive drivers, immune from radar detectors and jammers and few drivers look skyward when scanning for speed traps. "Everybody speeds," said Virginia State Trooper Michael S. Hackney, 26, who is specially trained in using the Visual Average Speed Computer and Recorder detection system, which employs a time and distance computer to clock speeds. The speeders they are searching for are the ones who wait for no one and are stopped by nothing except blue lights behind them. In a four-hour shift, the unit snagged almost two dozen drivers -- almost one every 10 minutes -- going faster than 80 mph, including four exceeding 90 mph, which could mean jail time. Source: Washington Post, January 4, 2007

Buckle Up! Unbelted Backseat Passengers Produce Deadly Results

New research from the University at Buffalo School of Engineering and Applied Sciences shows that unbelted backseat passengers risk injury or death to themselves and the driver seated in front of them in a head-on crash. Scientists used automobile sled tests simulating head-on crashes between two vehicles and crash-test dummies to demonstrate the likelihood of severe head and chest traumas for the driver and passengers caused by an unbelted passenger slamming into the seat of a belted driver.

"The tests show clearly that unrestrained rear-seat passengers place themselves, as well as their driver, at great risk of serious injury when involved in a head-on crash," says lead researcher James Mayrose, Ph.D., adjunct assistant professor of mechanical and aerospace engineering. The results are published in the Journal of Trauma. Mayrose points out that seat-belt use has increased significantly over the years. But most seat-belt laws for adults do not require adult rear-seat passengers to buckle up. "Based on our results, state law should mandate that everyone in the vehicle must wear a safety belt, no matter where they sit," Mayrose concludes. View the article at:

<http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/medicalnews.php?newsid=59692>

Toyota To Develop System for Cars That Detects Drunken Drivers And Shuts Car Down

The Toyota Motor Corp. is developing a fail-safe system for cars that detects drunken drivers and automatically shuts the vehicle down if sensors pick up signs of excessive alcohol consumption. Cars fitted with the detection system will not start if sweat sensors in the driving wheel detect high levels of alcohol in the driver's bloodstream. The system could also kick in if the sensors detect abnormal steering, or if a special camera shows that the driver's pupils are not in focus. The car is then slowed to a halt. The automaker hopes to fit cars with the system by the end of 2009. Nissan Motor Co.,



another Japanese car manufacturer, has already been experimenting with breathalyzer-like devices that could detect if a driver was drunken. Similar technologies, such as alcohol ignition interlocks, are in use in the U.S. and elsewhere. Source: Associated Press, January 3, 2007

In-Vehicle Technology Provides Even More Roadway Distractions

A San Francisco startup, Autonet Mobile, announced plans to debut a wireless service that can turn your car into a 65-mile-per-hour Wi-Fi hot spot. In a plugged-in era where more drivers are punching in directions on car navigation systems, dialing friends and colleagues on cell phones and selecting MP3 tracks from an iPod on their car stereos, Internet access seems like an inevitable development. Eddy Llaneras, a research scientist at Virginia Tech's Transportation Institute, said, "All these products engage the brain, and people don't realize how distracting some tasks can be. The technology's outpacing our ability to handle it." Llaneras investigates the role of human factors in accidents and thinks that people are forgetting the inherent dangers of driving. "They get behind a 2,500-pound car going 60 miles per hour, probably faster, and they just don't appreciate that even a few seconds glancing away from the road may increase their risk." His thoughts echo a growing number of auto industry researchers, analysts, watchdogs and law enforcement officials speaking out against the dangers of high technology on the road. Although there is not much hard data on the number of crashes or deaths caused by drivers distracted by technology in their vehicles, at least 24 states have recognized the problem by passing some form of distracted-driver legislation.

Source: San Mateo County Times, January 8, 2007

Wi-Fi Available From Avis But Face Technical and Legal Hurdles

Autonet Mobile is expected to announce it has reached an agreement with Avis Rent A Car System to provide wi-Fi to Avis customers by March. For \$10.95 a day, Avis will issue motorists a notebook-size portable device that plugs into a car's power supply and delivers a high-speed Internet connection. Initially, the service is intended for business travelers. The mobile Wi-Fi lets laptops and personal digital assistants link to the Internet without the benefit of wires representing an important step toward what technology experts call the "connected car." Questions about the legality of operating a vehicle with a Wi-Fi hotspot onboard are likely to be raised, according to analysts. Thomas Dickerson, the author of "Travel Law" (Law Journal Press, 2007) said it would be "easy to see that a technology like this could change the way people drive, because this could take people's attention off the road." Autonet claims the service is for passengers and that Avis would require renters to agree not to hold it liable for crashes resulting from irresponsible use.

Source: NY Times, January 2, 2007

Promoting Public Health Messages: Should We Move Beyond Fear-Evoking Appeals In Road Safety?

Article Abstract: Road traffic injury is one of the most significant global public health issues of the 21st century. The extent to which negative, fear-evoking messages represent effective persuasive strategies remains a contentious public and empirical issue. Nevertheless, negative, fear-based appeals represent a frequently used approach in Australasian road safety advertising. The authors conducted a series of focus groups with 16 licensed drivers to explore the potential utility of appeals to emotions other than fear. More specifically, they sought to explore the utility of positive emotional appeals, such as those incorporating humor. The themes emerging from the qualitative analysis suggested that both emotion and the provision of strategies are key components contributing to the overall persuasiveness of a road safety advertisement. Overall, it appears there is support for researchers and health advertising practitioners to provide further attention to the role that positive emotional appeals might play in future campaigns.

Source: Lewis IM, Watson B, White KM, Tay R. Qual Health Res 2007; 17(1): 61-74.



News from the USDOT

Feds Seek Tougher Auto Safety Testing

U.S. Transportation Secretary Mary Peters proposed tougher car safety crash tests and the addition of a side impact test in a move that would make it harder for vehicles to earn top marks in the government's star rating system. The call by Peters to reform the 27-year-old new car assessment program comes nearly two years after a Government Accountability Office report suggested the government's safety rating system was ineffective. The proposal would toughen frontal, side and rollover tests conducted by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). The proposals don't call for new legal requirements on automakers but would change how the government conducts tests that are used to assign the safety ratings. A major problem with the program is that nearly all vehicles pass current tests -- 87 percent of 2006 vehicles received four or five stars (out of five possible) for side impact crashes, and 95 percent earned top marks for frontal crashes. In recent years, tougher crash tests conducted by outside groups such as the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety have gotten more attention and have highlighted safety flaws in many vehicles that continued to get top marks in government tests. NHTSA would also give automakers a letter grade for how quickly they add advanced technology systems to vehicles, including electronic stability control, lane departure systems and rear-end collision avoidance.

Might Auto Safety Data Become A Trade Secret?

Before you buy a car, would you want to know how many complaints people had made to the manufacturer about defects, or how many warranty claims had been paid, or how many dealers had reported problems with the vehicle? Federal law says you have a right to such information. A federal law passed in 2000, the Transportation, Recall Enhancement, Accountability and Documentation Act requires vehicle and parts manufacturers to report all consumer complaints, warranty payments and dealers' field reports in the event of an injury or death involving a potentially defective product. Or they will be required once the act is finally implemented after years of legal wrangling. It looks like that could soon happen, although with significant alterations. While the data will still go to government officials, rule changes sought by the auto industry and backed by the Bush administration would deem information like consumer complaints and warranty payments "trade secrets" thus preventing the public from gaining access.

Joan Claybrook, president of Public Citizen, a Washington watchdog group, acknowledges, it looks like the auto industry might prevail when NHTSA issues a final ruling on the changes later this year. The agency stated in the Federal Register that the changes are needed because disclosing consumer complaints, warranty payments and dealers' field reports "will cause substantial competitive harm (to manufacturers) and will impair the government's ability to obtain this information in the future."

Source: San Francisco Chronicle, January 7, 2007

FMCSA Proposes Rule With Requirements And Incentives To Put Safety Technology To Record Hours-of-Service In More Trucks And Buses

In a press conference on January 11, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) released its much-anticipated notice of proposed rulemaking addressing the use of electronic on-board recorders (EOBRs) for compliance with the hours-of-service regulations. Truck and bus companies with a history of serious hours-of-service violations may be required to install electronic on-board recorders in all of their commercial vehicles for a minimum of two years. The proposed rule also would encourage industry wide use of electronic on-board recorders (EOBR) by providing incentives for voluntary use to get more trucks and buses using innovative safety technologies. The full Notice of Proposed Rulemaking will be published in the Federal Register on January 18, 2007, and public



comments will be accepted until April 18, 2007. To request a copy of the notice, email: news@fmcsa.dot.gov.

OOIDA Says Feds Missed Mark With EOBR Proposal

In reaction to an FMCSA announcement, last week, Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association (OOIDA) representatives are saying a proposal to require electronic on-board recorders (EOBR) on some trucks is a misdirected attempt to deal with the root causes of hours-of-service violations. While the proposal put forth by the FMCSA does not require the entire trucking industry to install EOBRs and is limited to the worst HOS violators, it will still do nothing to assist drivers to comply with HOS regulations while they are still being economically threatened by motor carriers, shippers and receivers. According to OOIDA, "the FMCSA's solution to hours-of-service enforcement goes long on Big Brother and short on the real issue. FMCSA continues to ignore the inescapable fact that such devices are no more capable than paper logs in providing an accurate record of a driver's compliance with the hours-of-service rules. As long as an EOBR records only the movement of a truck, and requires a driver to manually input his or her on-duty not driving time, it will fail to be what EOBR supporters wish them to be – a tamper-proof record of HOS compliance." To read the statement visit: http://www.oida.com/Documents/Press_Releases/EOBR_proposal_misses_mark.htm

Work-Home

Consumer Reports Find Most Infant Car Seats 'Fail Disastrously'

Most of the infant car seats tested by Consumer Reports "failed disastrously" in crashes at speeds as low as 35 mph, the magazine reported last week. The seats came off their bases or twisted in place. Of the 12 car seats tested, Consumer Reports said it could recommend only two, and it urged a federal recall of the poorest performing seat, the Evenflo Discovery. The only seats that passed all the tests were the Baby Trend Flex-Loc and the Graco SnugRide with EPS -- expanded polystyrene foam -- both selling for about \$90. Consumer Reports urged parents shopping for seats to buy one of those two, but it also noted that "any child car seat is better than no seat at all." "It's unconscionable that infant seats, which are designed to protect the most vulnerable children, aren't routinely tested the same as new cars," said Consumer Reports' Don Mays, a product safety director. Consumer Reports findings will be reported in Feb 2007 issue.

Study Identifies Need for New Approaches To Child Passenger Safety

Many parents are confused about the right way to install a child safety seat despite a rule to simplify the process, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). Results of a NHTSA survey indicate that about 40% of parents rely on seat belts when installing the car seat. About 55% of parents use the top tether in a vehicle's rear seat to secure their children. NHTSA in 2002 required new vehicles and child seats be equipped with attachments that make them fit together as a key in a lock so a seat belt would not be used. The system, Lower Anchors and Tethers for Children (LATCH) was developed to ensure seats fit snugly and to provide an alternative to using seat belts. "LATCH was supposed to simplify child safety seat installation for parents and this study shows that isn't happening," Nicole Nason, NHTSA administrator, said. She intends to bring LATCH stakeholders, the auto manufacturers, the car seat manufacturers, the retailers and the consumer activists, together early this year to discuss ways to make the safety system more efficient.

Massachusetts Provides New Penalties For Teen Drivers

Gov. Mitt Romney signed into tightened restrictions on teen drivers; the first in the state since 1998. Under the new law, teens will spend 40 hours driving with a parent or adult in the car, versus 12 hours under current law, and 12 hours of behind-the-wheel training rather than six. A special commission on



drowsy driving will be formed to comprehensively study the impact of drowsy driving on highway safety and the effect of sleep deprivation on drivers. The bill also addresses drag racing. Those with learner's permits will have their license or permit suspended for a year for a first offense and pay a \$250 fine and \$500 reinstatement fee. A second offense will bring a three-year suspension and double the fines. Those caught drag racing will also have to attend a "driver attitudinal-retraining course."

Online Magazine Promotes Transportation Careers For Young People

Go! Is a new free, online magazine for teens and young adults that is published by the Iowa State University's Center for Transportation Research and Education. The magazine published every other month is devoted to transportation careers to reinforce the fact that there are a lot of careers related to transportation. It is being launched with grants from the Women's Enrichment Fund from Iowa State's Provost's Office, the Retention and Recruitment program of Iowa State's Professional and Scientific Council. Also supported by donations from the Associated General Contractors of Iowa Foundation, the Midwest Transportation Consortium at Iowa State, the Iowa Chapter of the American Public Works Association and the Iowa Laborers/Employers Cooperation and Education Trust Fund. The magazine is now available at www.go-explore-trans.org

International Traffic Safety News

Many Drivers Test Positive For Illicit Drugs

A new study published in the Dec.1 issue of Injury Prevention found that one-third of all drivers pulled over for suspicion of impaired driving tested positive for illicit drugs even though they were under the legal limit for driving with alcohol in their systems. Irish researchers examined 2,000 blood and urine samples collected from drivers who had been pulled over by police for suspected drunk driving. They found that one in three samples taken from drivers found to be under the legal alcohol limit had one or more illicit drugs in their system -- a far higher rate than among drivers who were found to be legally intoxicated from alcohol consumption. Marijuana was the most common drug detected other than alcohol. The authors recommended that all drivers suspected of impairment be tested for illicit drugs as well as alcohol. "Too little attention has been paid to the adverse effects of drugs on driving, but drugged driving can be as dangerous as drunken driving," they wrote.

Source: Fitzpatrick, P., Daly, L., Leavy, C.P., Cusack, D.A. (2006) Drinking, drugs and driving in Ireland: more evidence for action. Injury Prevention, 12(6): 404-408.

Fleet Managers Growing Concerned About Foreign Drivers

Growing numbers of drivers using Britain's roads under foreign licenses are concerning fleet managers. Employers are uncertain about how to effectively monitor the licenses of new international employees, especially those from Eastern Europe. In addition, there are concerns that an influx of vehicles from abroad has led to an increase in uninsured and unroadworthy vehicles, creating increased dangers for fleet drivers. The issue does not just stop at cars and vans, as fleets said they were concerned about the growing number of left-hand drive motor trucks on UK roads, as they found it harder to spot overtaking vehicles.

Managing Driver Fatigue: Quantifying Real-World Performance Impairment

The Australian Transport Safety Board has released a report that explores the decrements in performance caused by increasing levels of fatigue using a simple test of visual reaction time and an interactive driving simulation task. The report also examines the effects of gender on fatigue and on



actual and perceived driving performance. View the report at:
http://www.atsb.gov.au/publications/2006/pdf/grant_200601.pdf

Periscope Cars To Tackle Bad Parking

A London council to improve traffic flow is piloting high-tech cars mounted with a camera in a periscope. Two such modified cars have deployed to enforce traffic and parking restrictions. They will focus principally on dangerous parking near schools and illegal parking at busy junctions. Warning notices, including photographic evidence, will be sent out for the first two weeks of the scheme. After that, penalty notices will be issued. Source: BBC News, January 11, 2007